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SUBJECT: EU TROIKA IN BURMA

Classified By: CDA Ron McMullen. Reason: 1.5 (d).

[11](#). (C) Summary: The EU Troika will not recommend any change in the EU's common position on Burma. That is the conclusion of British diplomats who accompanied the team on all of their visits in Yangon. Foreigners were uniformly concerned about deteriorating economic conditions, while Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic leaders sharply criticized the government for its delay in releasing political prisoners and opening up a serious political dialogue on constitutional issues. EU senior officials will meet October 11 to consider the Troika's report, but, barring dramatic developments between now and then, will likely recommend that the EU keep its common position unchanged. End Summary.

[12](#). (C) The EU Troika completed a disappointing visit to Burma September 10 and probably will not recommend any change in the EU's common position on Burma. According to British Embassy diplomats who accompanied the team on their visits, the group met with an almost unrelenting stream of pessimistic judgments on the state of the government's stalled dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and on the economic and social situation in Burma. The singular exception was Deputy Foreign Minister Khin Maung Win, who assured the troika that there was "a growing sense of confidence in the country," and "a strong sense of national identity." The country, he said, was on "the right path to fulfill its vision of a united democratic Burma."

[13](#). (C) All others were less sure of the country's future. Leon de Riedmatten was embarrassed and disappointed by the lack of progress in the government's talks with Aung San Suu Kyi. Ethnic leaders exhibited a "touchy reliance" on Aung San Suu Kyi to represent their interests in the current political talks, but were unremittingly harsh in their condemnation of the government, calling for additional sanctions. Aung San Suu Kyi was more measured in her comments but was still "bitterly disappointed" by the government's delays in releasing political prisoners and in opening a meaningful political dialogue on constitutional issues. Nevertheless, she reportedly endorsed continued humanitarian assistance for Burma and told the EU troika that they "must support UNDP" in its operations in Burma.

[14](#). (C) Foreign observers were focused on the economy. ASEAN Ambassadors painted a bleak picture, with some suggesting that economic hardships could lead to social unrest. The Chinese Ambassador, surprisingly, endorsed this view, emphasizing what he saw as an essential need for financial reform. UN and INGO heads, finally, lamented the difficulties of work in Burma and showed some discomfort with the current need for dual accountability: to both the government and Aung San Suu Kyi. While they admitted the political necessity of talking to both the government and the opposition, every contact they made with one side, they said, cost them with the other. That, however, was just life in Burma.

[15](#). (C) The troika did not see Secretary 1 Khin Nyunt, who was apparently detained in Monywa. The British are not sure how to interpret this. On the one hand, they believe Khin Nyunt wanted the troika visit to take place, having overruled Foreign Minister Win Aung, who sought to have the visit delayed. On the other hand, Khin Nyunt has been known to duck meetings that promise to be difficult, as this one would have been. If that was the case this time, then the delays in Monywa may just have been a convenient excuse.

[16](#). (C) In any case, the Troika came away from this visit with little to use in recommending any changes in the EU's common position on Burma. They will prepare a report that will be considered by a meeting of EU senior officials on October 11, but, barring some dramatic changes here between now and then, it is hardly likely that the EU will alter its position in any significant way.

Comment

[17](#). (C) The EU mission caught the mood of the day in Burma. Foreign missions are anxious about the deteriorating economic conditions, while domestic political actors are disappointed by the lack of meaningful dialogue between the government and Aung San Suu Kyi. While there is nothing unusual about this

-- political despair and economic anxiety are almost chronic conditions in Rangoon -- nevertheless, the reports the Troika received during this visit will leave them with little latitude in regard to policy recommendations. So far as we can see (and barring any dramatic developments over the next few weeks), Burma will have to live with the EU's common position as it is right now. End Comment.
McMullen